

Bianca, Pam

From: Marcy Fanello <marcyfanello@me.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 05, 2015 1:42 PM
To: LABTestimony
Subject: Bill SB 1035
Attachments: Letter of Concern.docx; ATT00001.htm

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to comment on today's hearing regarding bullying in the workplace. I am unable to attend the hearing in person but I feel strongly about the issue and would like to contribute my thoughts as a citizen on Connecticut and as someone who has witnessed workplace bullying by management. I have attached a letter that I sent to the Governor, my local legislators as well as both the House and Senate leadership. I have not heard from any of these offices since I sent the letter in October 2014. I worked at OHA for 18 months and I witnessed some egregious behavior on the part of management; behavior that created an environment of fear and insecurity.

I witnessed the termination of 3 state employees while I worked at OHA and two more people have been terminated since I left. In the course of 2 years, 5 permanent state employees were terminated and 6 permanent state employees resigned as we felt that we would at some point be targeted and possibly lose our jobs. As the attached letter indicates, it's impractical to attempt to describe details of why people were terminated however I can say that one person was reinstated after arbitration determined that the termination was unjust. 3 others are in various stages of fighting for their jobs and one simply took retirement because she was terminated just months shy of retiring from 33 years of state service.

I witnessed Laura Morris, who is now the Assistant State Healthcare Advocate, harass and belittle a manager in the office who resigned from her position out of fear and intimidation. Some examples of this follow. This manager was tasked with completing a report with only one day's notice and with absolutely no experience or training on how to complete the report. When she had to repeatedly ask questions about the process, Ms. Morris expressed clear irritation that she had to stop what she was doing. She could be heard saying that she was too busy to keep stopping her work. I witnessed her clap her hands in the manager's face while saying "chop, chop!" This was so blatant that another person in our office called me at my desk to ask if she had really heard Ms. Morris speak that way. Ms. Morris was not this person's supervisor. In fact, they were technically equals but the manager was never treated as such and in fact, she was treated as though she were a child. One day, she came into work with a drastic change in her hairstyle. When OHA General Counsel Demian Fontanella saw her, he acknowledged the change, looked directly at me and asked me if I had assessed her mental status, suggesting that she the reason she changed her hair was due to mental instability. This manager was also told to see a psychiatrist by Ms. Victoria Veltri, the State Healthcare Advocate. Ms. Veltri suggested she see her own psychiatrist and gave her the phone number. This was after the manager lost her father and her aunt within only a few months of each other and was additionally stressed by conflicting responses and messages from Ms. Veltri. Ms. Veltri sent her a text message sending condolences. Another person in our office (not a manager and not supervised by Ms. Veltri) lost a close friend and she was given a greeting card by Ms. Veltri. This shows blatant favoritism and extreme insensitivity for the manager's losses. I personally was counseled and told I was unprofessional after speaking up at a meeting. We were given only a few days' notice that our office would be assisting Access Health with taking calls from the public when the exchange was being launched. In a meeting set up to "train" the staff on how to assist callers, Ms. Morris was disrespectful when people stopped her to ask questions about the material. She rolled her eyes, threw her pen down on the table and sighed heavily; making it obvious she was irritated. I said, in a calm and neutral tone that I felt we should be given time to ask questions (it was the first time I'd spoken at a meeting in the nearly 18 months that I had been there). Both Ms. Morris and Mr. Fontanella became argumentative and insisted that we'd been asking questions for 45 minutes; there were 3 hours set aside for the meeting. I did not engage in

debate but simply said that I felt I needed to say what I said. That was a Monday; by Friday, I was spoken to by Mr. Fontanella who said I was unprofessional in the meeting and that "people in the office had come to [him]". I pointed out that I said or did nothing unprofessional and that several of my peers had come to me to express gratitude for speaking up. He suggested that I go directly to him if I have comments. He even suggested that if I "wanted to call [him] an asshole" he is perfectly open to that in a private meeting. I noted that I would never do that and that in fact, it would be unprofessional to do so.

I was not comfortable with Mr. Fontanella from my start at OHA. On one occasion he made an attempt to compliment my response to an insurance carrier. He simply replied to me in an email with the comment, "so pretty", meaning that my correspondence was good. On another occasion, during a casual, pre-meeting conversation with myself and another colleague I commented that I was from Wisconsin. We had been discussing cars and I noted that there are fewer foreign cars there. Mr. Fontanella stated "that's because you'll get shot if you don't [drive American]". I was shocked by both of these comments but did not say anything because I was new to the office and I saw 3 people being investigated for termination. I did not feel secure in addressing the inappropriate remarks.

I understand that there is limited time to review everything that citizens are submitting on his topic and I've written a great deal.

I and my colleagues from OHA felt that this forum was an appropriate place to voice these concerns once again. Also, while not a bullying issue necessarily, the fact that OHA management has repeatedly misrepresented the status of a funded project to the Appropriations Committee. The attached letter contains detail on that however in short, they suggested that a project was going strong when there was no work being done on it whatsoever. I'm interested to know if they addressed this project again this year with Appropriations.

I sent the attached letter to numerous people in the Legislature but I have not heard back from anyone. Congresswoman Esty did respond to a joint letter from me and others who have been directly impacted by the conduct of management at OHA however since I was the one who signed the Release of Information, the matter was forwarded to Congressman Larson's office who indicated that his office had reached out to me but this has not occurred.

I have been willing to speak freely as I have left OHA and I no longer fear what they could do to me. Some others are in arbitration or simply fearful that there could be backlash if they speak out.

Thank you for taking the time to review this information and please contact me if you would like to discuss this matter further. As it stands now, the conduct of OHA management is a good example of bullying and corruption in the workplace. I think it's even more egregious when there are government officials and employees behaving in this manner. They are public servants who owe the citizenship of their state honesty and integrity.

My sincerest thanks,

Marcy

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